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THE RIGHT USE OF BOOKS:

A LECTURE.

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By WILLIAM P. ATKINSON,

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NOTE.

The following Lecture was written for, and first read to, a class of young business men, at that admirable institution, the Boston Young Men's Christian Union. Many additions have since been made to it, and some parts have been altered. For the opinions it contains no one is responsible but the author.

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THE RIGHT USE OF BOOKS.

THAT excellent writer, the Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, discoursing the other day on Books and Critics,* quotes Mrs. Browning as saying: "The *ne plus ultra* of intellectual indolence is the reading of books. It comes next to what the Americans call *whittling*." Nothing can be more diametrically opposed to popular belief; for that belief is that there is something meritorious in the very act of reading. It does not matter much what we read — barring immoral reading — provided we only read. Parents love to see their children reading, — it keeps them out of mischief, they say, — and take little heed of the quality or direction of their reading; as if, the main point once gained, these were of quite inferior importance. Is it not all contained in books? There is a sort of sacredness attached, in their minds, to the printed page; as if, the *imprimatur* once received,

* Fortnightly Review, Nov., 1877.

thought took on quite a different character from what it had before.

Nevertheless, I am much of the mind of Mrs. Browning. I do not believe that the world is much, if any, the wiser for a good deal of the reading that goes on in it; and perhaps I cannot better begin what I have to say on the subject than by trying to ascertain why this is true.

Perhaps I may say that the answer is an obvious one. We do not profit by our reading because we do not know how to read, and we do not know how because we have never been taught. To be sure, it is a very difficult art; and in one sense, and that the deepest, we may say that it cannot be taught. Goethe is reported to have said: "I have been fifty years trying to learn how to read, and I have not learned yet." The art which Goethe had not learned in fifty years, we need not feel ashamed not to be perfect in; and yet the question may well arise, Why, with all the reading that goes on, is so much well-meant effort absolutely thrown away? I am a teacher in a school of science, but my own teaching lies not among scientific, but among non-scientific subjects, — though I cannot use the current phraseology without a protest, — and I am in the habit of prefacing my instruction in history

and literature to the successive classes of young men who come to me by a request that they would give me an account of their previous English studies and English reading; and I remember the contrast which, not long ago, two of their answers afforded. One wrote me a list of English authors, beginning with Chaucer and ending with Hawthorne whom he had "gone through," as the phrase is, at school, and wound up with the naïve remark that there was only one study that he hated more than he hated English Literature, and that was the other study with which I was about to engage his attention; namely, Rhetoric and Composition. And herein I suppose he was only honestly and frankly expressing the state of mind of the average school-boy, which is the result of the ordinary school teaching of these subjects. A state of chronic disgust at good literature which drives him to "dime novels" for recreation, combined with a chronic incapacity to pen an ordinary letter correctly, is, I fear, too often the upshot of the literary training of our schools. The other told me that he was the son of a country physician; that he had not had much schooling, but that his father had a small general library, and that he had done much reading in his father's books up in the retirement

of his father's hay-mow ; and the hay-mow had so far proved the better school that no disgust was indicated for Rhetoric or Literature. What the school, with its elaborately misdirected effort, had failed to do for the one, the other had done for himself: he had learned in part the Art of Reading.

I do not wish to draw any argument from these examples in favor of what is called self-education, or to underrate the value of school training, even with all its present imperfections and absurdities. At school, the child's mind is drilled, however badly ; trained, in company with others, to take the first steps on that broad highway which all generations must follow ; put in possession, however imperfectly, not so much of knowledge, as of those tools of knowledge which are indispensable, if higher real knowledge is to be acquired afterwards. I would be the last to overlook the importance, in early school training, of those semi-mechanical elements of drill, discipline, and mental gymnastic, on which the value of the mind as an instrument for future acquisition so much depends. But why — the question comes — does this school training, so elaborately applied, so often prove fruitless ? Why does this school knowledge, so painfully acquired, lie like dead lumber in the mind, even if it enter

the mind at all? Why does it not take root, and quicken into life, and grow? The answer can only be that pedants have exalted the means into an end; in perfecting the machinery, have lost sight of the object the machinery should accomplish; and thus, while our children are overtaught and overdrilled, they are not educated; and the defects of our educational system are nowhere so patent as in its failure to impart a real taste for books, to communicate the true Art of Reading.

You have invited me, whose calling keeps me among books, to say a word to you about the right use of them. And because my calling has kept me among books, and I can thus bring personal experience to bear upon the subject, I hope I may be able to say a helpful word or two. But, though I speak of an Art of Reading, do not suppose I mean to lay down any body of rules for your guidance. I have no such rules. In study as in life, each of us must find his own way, though there are none of us so wise that we cannot be helped by the experience of our neighbors. It is some of the results of that experience that I purpose giving you; and if some of my remarks seem trite, and quite wanting in the charm of novelty, I can only plead that the most important subjects are the most hackneyed,

and that one of the results of my experience has been to find that the older I grow the more highly I value many truths which, for the very reason that they are trite and obvious, are most certain of being neglected.

I shall therefore begin with this remark, that for success in reading and study, though it is well enough to have a good head, it is far more important to have a good *digestion.* I do not think it makes us unhappy to know that we have not all the wits of our eminent intellectual neighbors. What does make us unhappy is not to be able to use all the little wits that we possess; and we never can do that, unless we have a good stomach. Now, to the end of having a good stomach, in order that we may be in possession of all our wits, we must be abstemious in our — reading. Nothing so certainly deranges the digestion as cramming the brain. This is one of those trite remarks which I wish above all things to impress upon you. If it were really impressed upon the mind of the community, it would revolutionize our education. That the very first and most indispensable of all the qualifications that go to make a successful student is a sound physical constitution, is the great truth which all modern physiology preaches, and, none the

less, which almost all modern practice still ignores. And it seems in vain that modern physiology tells us why, — that it is only thus that fresh and healthy blood can flow, to set in healthy activity that wonderful little instrument, delicate as wonderful, by means of which alone, while we are on this little ball of earth, we think. We must have an intellectual existence of some kind. To live — what is it but to think and feel? And, willingly or unwillingly, that existence is carried on here through the medium of that material instrument, the brain. And it is by the indirect control we possess over that, that we are enabled largely to determine what sort of an intellectual and emotional life we shall lead upon the earth, — whether it shall take us over clear and sunny mountain-tops, or through the very valley of the shadow of death.

This is all getting trite and commonplace enough; and yet is it not what we still ignore in all our practice? The popular idea of a young scholar is that he should be a pale and spectacled young man, very thin, and with a slight and interesting tendency to sentimentality and consumption. Parents send their weakly children to college; and it is supposed to be an ordinance of nature that a large proportion of what are called promising young persons should

die young. Well, they are promising young persons in the sense of never performing any thing; but, instead of killing them with a college, it would be vastly better to turn them out to grass till they got strong enough to exchange promise for performance; at least, till such time as we can get colleges organized that will not kill them. While they continue in that so-called promising condition, depend upon it, they are not stuff to make successful scholars of. You might as well take all the weakly trees to make an orchard, or all the lean and stunted cattle to make a herd. "How can you," said I once to the most laborious student I ever knew, — "how can you do such an enormous amount of study and mental labor?" "Because," was the answer, "I laid up so many rods of stone wall on my father's farm when I was a boy."

It is plain, then, that the most important question for the good student and reader is not, amidst this multitude of books which no man can number, how much he shall read. The really important questions are, first, what is the quality of what he does read; and, second, what is his manner of reading it. There is an analogy which is more than accidental between physical and mental assimilation and digestion; and, homely as the illustration may seem, it is

the most forcible I can use. Let two sit down to a table spread with food: one possessed of a healthy appetite, and knowing something of the nutritious qualities of the various dishes before him; the other cursed with a pampered and capricious appetite, and knowing nothing of the results of chemical and physiological investigation. One shall make a better meal, and go away stronger and better fed, on a dish of oatmeal, than the other on a dinner that has half emptied his pocket. Shall we study physiological chemistry and know all about what is food for the body, and neglect mental chemistry, and be utterly careless as to what nutriment is contained in the food we give our minds? I am not speaking here of vicious literature: we don't spread our dinner-tables with poisons. I speak only of the varying amount of *nutritive matter* contained in books. Only think of the range — what we may call the nutritive range — which lies between Shakspeare and Mr. Tupper! And yet "Proverbial Philosophy" weighs as much avoirdupois, and looks as fair on the library shelves, as the greatest of poets.

We have been building a monument lately in Boston, but I think the grandest and noblest monument our good old city ever reared is that Public

Library of hers, open, without money and without price, to rich and poor alike ; albeit, its architecture does leave something to desire. But I saw the other day, in a newspaper, lamentable statistics of the use it is put to by the rising generation. There is a storehouse of the richest and best intellectual food, but mingled with great heaps of husks and not a little poison, and they have never been taught how to pick out the grain from the chaff, not even how to avoid the poison. I do not think they find much there that is positively vicious, but there seems to be an absolutely unlimited demand for twaddle. Does not this prove what I set out with saying, that our schools do not teach the Art of Reading? At the only schools the great majority of the boys and girls attend, they have been set down to a Barmecide feast of empty cups and platters. The alphabet, cyphering, grammar, writing, are not knowledge: they are only the tools of knowledge, — indispensable tools, indeed, — skill in the use of which it is the business, but not the only nor the highest business, of these schools to impart. But the poor boys and girls are kept, year in and year out, wielding knife and fork of grammar and spelling and cyphering over dishes empty of all real mental nutriment, diligently dipping spoons

into bowls where the intellectual draught that should have slaked their thirst has been forgotten.* Then we turn these babies in intellect loose in a public library, and expect them to find their way! What wonder that, to supply the demands of such readers, twaddle-mills, if I may be allowed such an expression, are set up, and cannot grind their grist of intellectual chaff fast enough to supply the market. After all, age has its advantages. I thank my stars that I was born in those prehistoric times when boys read Scott's novels, and before the advent of the Oliver Optics and the Mrs. Southworths, who are doing so much to weaken the mental fibre of this generation.

Just as the Public Library is the needful supplement to the Public School, — and Boston will some day be honored for having been the first to give the truth a practical recognition, — and a good collection of books has been well called the college of the nineteenth century, so it will never be rightly made use of till our schools give a really efficient preparation for it by teaching the Art of Reading.

* A long step will have been taken towards remedying this state of things when the admirable "Suggestions accompanying the Course of Study for Grammar and Primary Schools," recently issued by the Boston Board of School Supervisors, shall be universally carried out in the spirit in which they have been drawn up.

And at the foundation of this art of reading there lie certain distinctions, which, if we learn to make them, will guide us in our choice of books. Let me quote one of these distinctions from De Quincey, — that, namely, between what he calls the Literature of Knowledge and the Literature of Power. You will find it in his Essay on Pope.

"There is the literature of *knowledge*," he says, "and there is the literature of *power*. The function of the first is to *teach;* the function of the second is to *move*. The first is a rudder; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second speaks, ultimately it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy." And he illustrates his distinction thus: "What do you learn from 'Paradise Lost'? Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery-book? Something new, something that you did not know before, in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched cookery-book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem? What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level: what you owe is *power*, that is, exercise and

expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards. . . . All the steps of knowledge, from first to last, carry you further on the same plane, but could never raise you one foot above your ancient level of earth; whereas the very *first* step in power is a flight, — is an ascending into another element."

Such, slightly abbreviated, is Mr. De Quincey's fine distinction. Now I think the books we are most concerned with here are those belonging, not to the literature of knowledge, but those belonging to the literature of power, and first and foremost the books of the poets. Is it not worth our while to study Poetry? "*Study* poetry!" I hear some sentimental young lady or gentleman say. "What occasion is there for study? why, it 's my delight. Stars and flowers and the moon and hearts and darts and every thing lovely, — all those dear, delightful volumes in blue and gold, I have them about me all the time." Yes, *about* you, my dear sentimental young lady or young gentleman, on the centre-table, and in elegant rows on the bookshelves, — about you, but not *in* you.

I once met with a lecture — and a very good lecture it was — by Mr. Palgrave, an excellent

critic, on the "Scientific Study of Poetry," and it was addressed to the members of a *Workingmen's* College. Was there ever a more incongruous combination of ideas, some people would say, than this of Science, Study, Poetry, and Workingmen? And yet I venture to say that unless we approach the subject of Poetry in just that spirit, viewing it first as a serious study, next as a study involving principles quite as much as Chemistry or any other of those branches of the investigation of the laws of matter to which, by a strange perversity of language, the term Science is getting to be exclusively confined; and, again, if we do not believe that the subject of Poetry is one pre-eminently fitted to be a theme for a lecture to workingmen, — in other words, if we do not believe that Poetry addresses itself not merely to the so-called "cultured classes," who are so ready to believe that they possess a monopoly of wisdom, but to man as man, we shall never know any thing at all about it, — we shall remain in the intellectual condition of the blue-and-gold young lady, with her poetry on her centre-table, but not in her soul.

I have no thought of attempting here a definition of Poetry, though I should like to come and give you a lecture on the art of reading it. Whether

we call it, with Aristotle, imitation; whether we say more worthily, with Lord Bacon, "that it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind; whereas, reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things;" * whether, in more modern times, we define it, with Shelley, as "the best and happiest thoughts of the best and happiest minds;" or say, with Matthew Arnold, that "poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things;" and, again, that "it is to the poetical literature of an age that we must in general look for the most perfect and most adequate interpretation of that age;" or whether we say, with the greatest poet of the last generation, that "poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science," † — all I am concerned to say here is, that Poetry is that branch of the Literature of Power pre-eminently worthy of *study*, and that without study we shall know but little about it.

Now suppose, to revert to my first position, that

* Advancement of Learning, B. II. 4. 2.

† Wordsworth's Critical Preface.

our children were really taught to read Poetry in school ; — I am as sure that it could be done as I am that it is not done now ; — suppose that the tyranny of Gradgrind, with his clatter of grammar-books and spelling-books and cyphering-books, most of them useless, were somewhat abated, and feeling and imagination as well as bare intellect were appealed to, and not only appealed to but trained and developed and directed, — do you think there would be such a rush at the library for the Oliver Optics, and the Mrs. Southworths, and, worse still, for the Miss Braddons of the day ? I am sure the twaddle-factories would have to shut up, or at least work half-time. Peter Parleyism and other goody-goodyisms would be less rampant, and the gin-and-water of the circulating library would lose its attractive flavor.

" Do not laugh at him," said an accomplished lady once to me, as we were talking of an eccentric teacher, famous in the days of our youth, — " do not laugh at him. He taught me really to love and appreciate English poetry, so that it has been a delight to me all my life through." That was much to say of any teacher ; that was true education.

I just spoke of the gin-and-water of the circulating library ; but let me put in a good word for

the circulating library, and for the study of novels. Yes, the *study* of novels ; for novel-writing has become, in these modern days, an important branch of art, and novels a very real and substantial department of literature. He who either neglects or despises or fears novels, not only cuts himself off from one of the very best sources of intellectual and moral refreshment, but ignores a branch of literature from which a wise reader can get instruction as well as entertainment. I am not a very social man, and some of my best friends are in novels. Don't you know all Jane Austen's people ? Have you ever lain on a couch, languid with illness, and had some pleasant voice read "Wives and Daughters" to you ? I say nothing of the great artists, — of Thackeray, of George Eliot ; but such is my love for the dear old mother-country, that I can greatly enjoy Mr. Trollope's best stories, and even read his worst, for the sake of the glimpses of English life they give me. I can even find an hour's amusement in the absurdities of that extraordinary mountebank whose remarkable fortune it now is for the moment to misgovern England.

You know what Talleyrand said to the young man who could not play whist : "Young man, what an unhappy old age you are laying up for yourself !"

And so, of him who has not learned how to read novels, it may be said, What a source of refreshing and improving and innocent amusement he has failed to avail himself of!

You say that no department of literature contains so much mischievous rubbish. It is very true, and the only remedy is such a training of the popular taste as would make such rubbish intolerable; and I know of no more hopeless feature in the rather hopeless-looking subject of popular education, than its failure to train the imagination, the greatest of all educational forces. Is it owing to the remains in us, here in New England, of that old Puritanism which hated every thing beautiful because it could only associate it with that license and lawlessness against which it was the grim and unlovely protest? Let us hold the virtues of our Puritan Fathers in all honor, for they were the salvation of the nation; but let us discriminate. These same Puritan Fathers of ours were stone-blind to much that constitutes the very essence of all true education.

Many good people have Puritanic objections to poetry, and still more to novel-reading, because of its abuses; and certainly the intemperate novel-reader is little, if any, better than the intemperate dram-drinker. But there is another class of ob-

jectors whom the defender of imaginative literature has to meet, and that is the Gradgrinds beforementioned, the so-called practical men. "Poetry? Imagination?" they say. "What have they to do with the realities of life?" — meaning corn, cotton, lard, iron, and other solid things. "Do you think a young man who goes mooning about in the woods, and can't for the life of him tell whether the timber is fit to cut, or can go right by a good water-privilege and never see it, is going to succeed in life?" Well, Mr. Goschen is a practical man. Mr. Goschen is a London banker, who has succeeded in life. He was a member of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet. He is an author; not of poems, but of a valuable work on Foreign Exchanges — not a poetical subject. He is certainly a good authority for our practical men. And this is what he has just been saying in a public address in that most practical and dirty of cities, Liverpool. "Mr. Goschen gave a powerful address," says the Liverpool newspaper, "on the cultivation of the imagination as essential to the highest success in politics, in learning, and in the commercial business of life. The cultivation of the imagination would no more enfeeble men's minds than a journey to a fine scene or a breezy shore would enfeeble their bodies. He preferred

'Alice in Wonderland' for children to any amount of verbal photographs of good little Tommies. Imagination was needful for business; and he gave as an illustration his own father. 'Let me give you,' he says, 'another instance on this point, and you will forgive me if it is somewhat of a personal character; but it may come home to some of the young men here more forcibly than the most eloquent generalization. My own father came over to England as a very young man, with one friend as young as himself, and with very little more money in his pocket than a great many of the students here, I dare say, possess; and he has told me, half in joke and half in earnest, that he was obliged to found a firm because he wrote such a bad hand that no one would take him for a clerk. But he was steeped to the lips in intellectual culture. In his father's house, as a boy, he had met all the great literary men of the best period of German literature. He had heard Schiller read his own plays. He had listened to the conversation of great thinkers and great poets. He was a good historian, an acute critic, well versed in literature, and a very good musician to boot. But did this stand in his way as a young man coming over to London with a view to found a business? Has it

stood in his way of founding a firm of which I, as his son, am very proud? It did not stand in his way. On the contrary, it aided his success; and with this before me I am able to speak with affectionate conviction of the fact that culture will not interfere with the due discharge of the duties of business men in any sphere of business life.'" *

Do not, I beg you, spoil a good handwriting, if you possess that useful accomplishment, in hopes of thereby emulating the success of the elder Mr. Goschen. I don't believe that a bad handwriting leads to certain success in Lombard Street; neither do I believe that an untrained imagination leads to success there or anywhere else. Observe that the elder Mr. Goschen's was a real, not a sham education. We may not have the fortune to hear great authors read their own poems; but we may read, without the labor of acquiring a foreign tongue, the poems and dramas, the works of genius of all kinds, of a literature second to none in richness and variety to any that the world ever saw. When shall we learn to be as wise as the Germans, and make use of it as fully as we might as an instrument of popular culture? †

* The Culture of the Imagination, an address delivered by the Rt. Hon. George J. Goschen, M. P., at the Liverpool Institute. London. Effingham Wilson. 1878.

† "German schools have a good habit," says Matthew Arnold,

But Mr. Goschen goes much farther, and is much more precise and practical in his view, than those who in general terms admit the indirect value of general culture in the practical business of life. He claims that the possession of imaginative power is *directly* needful to success in all the most practical and prosaic of business affairs, and indispensable to the formation of a sound judgment in politics. Commending to his hearers the study of history as the study of all others best suited to cultivate that masculine power of conceiving other circumstances than those which immediately surround us, which is so necessary to the politician and to the man of large affairs, he says, "I am often frightened when, upon some great question, I hear a man say, 'I am going to take a very business-like view of this question.' It is almost as bad as when a man, upon some question of propriety, says he is going to look at it as a man of the world. I then always suspect the judgment he is going to give. When a man says, 'I am going to look at a great question as a business man,' it is ten to one he means, 'I am not going to be gulled by any of your grand generalizations. I am not going to be misled by historical parallels, or se-

"of reading and commenting on German poetry as we read and comment on Homer and Virgil, but do not read and comment on Chaucer and Shakspeare."

duced by any rhetorical phrases. I do not wish to be told what foreign nations are thinking of or are likely to do. I wish to judge of this as a sensible man of business. I know the effect such and such a line of policy will have on trade and on the funds, and that is enough for me.' Now, I have sometimes hoped that I might have claimed myself to be a business man, or a business-like man, and most of you will consider yourselves the same; and I say that it is prostituting the name of 'business-like' to confound it, as is often done, with a narrow-minded view of questions. That is not business-like at all: it is very un-business-like. Call it by whatever name you will, whether narrow-mindedness or not, I consider that to judge from hand to mouth of all great questions is a very dangerous tendency, — a tendency which is fostered by ignorance of the great principles of human action, and of the former teaching of the history of the world. . . . The study of history will correct these tendencies, and will mitigate the influence of any narrow-minded judgment of passing events."

Again he says: "I began with the nursery, and I am afraid I have launched you in the end into a very wide field indeed. I might have followed up my argument by showing the necessity, even for

many serious domestic questions, of cultivating the faculty to which I have alluded. I might almost venture to say that a House of Commons without imagination would to my mind be a bad House of Commons and a dangerous House of Commons. A church without imagination would be a church without life, and without the power of retaining its hold upon its flock. Imagination, in the sense which I have described, is necessary everywhere."

Mr. Goschen expatiates eloquently on the value of History as a study for the young business men who heard him. Do not think that it is because I am a teacher of History myself that I echo his recommendation to a similar audience. In my own serious judgment, no study is half so valuable to young men engaged in the active pursuits of life as a *real* study of History, and all the preparatory and collateral work which a real study of History implies. I say a *real* study of History; for I do not mean by it that petty memorizing of miserable compendiums, the "moths of History," * as Bacon long ago called them, which goes on in schools;

* "As for the corruptions and moths of history, which are *Epitomes*, the use of them deserveth to be banished, as all men of sound judgment have confessed: as those that have fretted and corroded the sound bodies of many excellent histories, and wrought them into base and unprofitable dregs."—*Advancement of Learning*, B. II. 2, 3.

nor do I mean, on the other hand, that pottering over the mere gossip of the past, that perusal of volume upon volume of "memoirs of the unmemorable," which passes for History with antiquarians; as if worthless facts were any the less burdens to the memory because they happened five hundred years ago, or as if unsavory stories out of the past could be deodorized by time so as to be any less unsavory now. By the study of History I mean that robust and manly grappling with the real problems of the Past which will make you more thoughtful, more useful, more far-seeing and wide-seeing men in the Present. And let no one think that History studied in this fashion is work for idle or languid hours. History is the record of the life of the past. It shows how the men of the past solved the ethical, religious, social, economical, political problems of their day and generation. The purpose of a wise man's studies is to learn how to solve his own life-problem. Placed in the flowing stream of time, which will not stop at his bidding, which whirls him away if he does not strike boldly out and learn the nature of the medium in which he is floating and the currents that bear him on, it must be, unless the world is all haphazard, that the wisest guidance is to be found in the

study of the records of those who have gone before him. Here is the story of past failures and of past success. It is on the past we must build; it is out of the past that the present must come. I believe it is by the study of the records of the past that the young student can gather that concrete experience which is the necessary foundation for all profitable abstract thinking. If there is any thing I feel disposed to caution you against it is a premature study of metaphysics, — that vague beating of the air in which so many youthful minds weary themselves in vain. Philosophy will come, but let it be the ripe fruit of experience based on the actual facts of life. Do not lose yourselves prematurely in the cobweb mazes of the metaphysicians. Accumulate experience, and keep your feet firm on the ground of fact, and enlarge the horizon of real life by lifting the curtain which hides from us the life of the long procession of those who have gone before us, — that picturesque procession, by the side of whose story the best fiction of the romancer grows pale and uninteresting.

But do not suppose you can put any life into the teaching of the past, unless you can learn to see the History that is a-making all round you. He who has not learned to read his daily newspaper will

hardly read Gibbon and Grote to any purpose; he who cannot see History in the streets of Boston will trouble himself to no purpose with books about Rome or Pompeii.

But, alas! who is taught History? In my young days, — and I fear matters are not much mended, — as Isaac Taylor says, some rattling dry bones, some grinning skeleton of Chronology, was hung up before us, and we were told, "There, my young friends, there is the noble and beautiful study of History: fall in love and become passionately attached to that." But Nature taught us better. Somehow, we did not clasp the dull compendiums to our bosoms, and swear they should be our daily companions for the rest of our lives. I am afraid the dull compendiums were wrathfully swept into the lowest cupboard when the day of school emancipation came; and the misfortune is that the pupil thus miseducated fancies he has no taste for History. He might as well say he has no taste for Life, no taste for Thought; and indeed it is more than probable that school — that realm of unreason — has done all it could to make that true. When better days shall dawn on us, I believe that a real study of History and all the kindred and collateral studies which it implies will be found near the very heart of

our system of school study. And if I say no more about it here, it is because I hope you will give me the opportunity to make it my special subject on some future occasion.

But I must not dwell so long on one branch of my subject. What shall I say of the Literature of Knowledge? I have a few thoughts to suggest. I think that, in view of the headlong speed with which mere knowledge is now pursued all round us, it begins to be needful to advocate the cultivation of a little of the spirit of contented ignorance. Berzelius, I think it was, who said that he was the last general chemist. The single science of Chemistry had grown into such vast proportions that no one man could ever again attempt in a single lifetime to traverse the whole field of it. And if this is true of a single branch, what shall we say of this vast new intellectual world of modern Physical Science? Sitting in my study in a Scientific School, with my books of Literature and History about me, I look with some awe and wonder at what goes on in the laboratories and lecture-rooms of my colleagues, of the greater part of which I do not understand one single word. But it is a contented wonder and a happy ignorance. Have not I my greater world of man's thoughts and man's doings,

— a field itself far wider than I can cultivate? I will not be an Alexander to cry for new worlds to conquer.

But I have one practical remark to make. Did you ever happen to see, in shrewd, old, hard-headed Bishop Whately's annotations on Lord Bacon's Essays, a good passage about what is and what is not superficiality? It is in the sentence in Bacon's Essay on Studies, "Crafty men contemn studies." "This contempt," says the bishop, "whether of crafty men or narrow-minded men, finds its expression in the word 'smattering;' and the couplet is become almost a proverb, —

> 'A little learning is a dangerous thing:
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.'

But the poet's remedies for the dangers of a little learning are both of them impossible. No one can 'drink deep' enough to be in truth any thing more than superficial; and every human being that is not a downright idiot must *taste*." And the bishop, in his downright way, goes on to give practical illustrations of the usefulness of a little knowledge, and proceeds: "What, then, is the smattering, the imperfect and superficial knowledge that does deserve contempt? A slight and superficial knowledge is justly condemned when it is put

in the place of more full and exact knowledge. Such an acquaintance with chemistry and anatomy, for instance, as would be creditable and not useless to a lawyer, would be contemptible for a physician; and such an acquaintance with law as would be desirable for him, would be a most discreditable smattering for a lawyer." *

The bishop's remarks amount in substance to this, that on the great majority of subjects an ordinary man's knowledge must be limited to a very general view; and that a general view is not a superficial view, provided it is an accurate general view, and is not taken for more than it is worth; while it is truly superficial to be ever so well acquainted with all the minutest details of some corner of a great subject, and be at the same time utterly incapable of taking a correct view of it as a whole. We justly admire the sketches of great artists, for they show the same sweep and power of design as their finished paintings. Should we admire some little corner of a great canvas, finished with minute and painful pre-Raphaelite diligence, while all the rest was left a blank? We have no opportunity to know, because no artist works so.

* Whately's Bacon's Essays, p. 446, Am. Ed.

Now, I have found fault with the teaching of our elementary schools as too often degenerating into a dead, dry, empty clatter. I find fault with the teaching of what we are pleased to call our high schools on an opposite ground, because it attempts so much that it becomes a thing of shreds and patches. Only look at the course of study laid down in them! The boys escape into active life, and get there a real education. It is not that the parents grudge the time, that they do not keep them at school longer: it is from a true instinct, which tells them that any real work is a better education than more of such schooling. The burthen of this omniscience falls on the girls, who, having nothing else to do, are kept at school longer; and really, if they did but take in all they are supposed to be taught, they might well go forth, at about the age of eighteen, as missionaries of knowledge and instructors of the nation. But, alas! it is but the bishop's true smattering, — that smattering that does deserve contempt. It runs off them as water runs off a duck's back; and in a very few years, or months, these young persons who have "gone through" (I like that phrase) all the "ologies," are found to be no wiser than their neighbors. Of much of the teaching that goes on in what we call our high

schools, all that can be said is, that it is laboriously, conscientiously, and elaborately bad; because it attempts so much, and is so little suited to the wants or capacities of its recipients.

Or, I might illustrate the same point by an American classical education, which is an education ingeniously arranged so as not to accomplish its object, but is held in superstitious and undeserved esteem for the supposed excellence of the mental discipline it imparts: as though one should be offered a great treasure if he would walk to Springfield, and should walk only as far as Worcester, where indeed he found no treasure, but returned contented (though with much loss of time), and congratulating himself on the admirable muscular exercise the excursion had given his legs. And indeed so valuable is exercise that he might well be contented even with the treadmill, if there were not so many other directions in which he could have reached a treasure and got his exercise too.

In this wide ocean, then, of modern *knowledge*, how shall we save ourselves from being lost? I think there is one principle by which we can be guided. The popular notion of an educated man is that he is a "book in breeches;" a sort of reservoir, which you can tap for miscellaneous information.

A vulgar person, when he hears an educated man say he doesn't know, say, the date of King Sesostris, thinks that that man's education don't amount to much. To such an one, he is the most learned man who can answer the greatest number of questions. Hence this epidemic of examinations which is attacking our education-system, and which we have caught from England, where, it is to be hoped, it has pretty nearly run its course, — competitive examinations, civil-service examinations, examinations for women, and all the rest. Wise old Dr. Wiese, returning to England twenty years after he wrote his first book on her schools, thinks England has gone examination-mad; and I greatly fear that we are catching the infection. Here is his description of the present condition of England: "From time to time," he says, "something like an alarum-bell sounds throughout the country: 'Come and be examined!' And they come, — boys and girls, young and old, — having crammed into themselves as much knowledge as they could. How they have acquired what they know is never asked, nor are they shown what is the best method." *

"The apparent grandeur and vastness of this

* German Letters on English Education. London, 1877.

system of examination," he says quietly, "according to which the same set of printed papers is distributed over England, and sent all over the world, to Canada, the Mauritius, &c., has nothing imposing for us." No, it has nothing imposing for Germans, because they know what true education means; know that an educated man is not a book in breeches, not a dead reservoir of information which you can tap; and that an educated man may not know the date of King Sesostris, and, in order to be really educated, must continue ignorant of a great many far more important things; — that, in short, to be educated is to be something real, and that the first step towards that intellectual and moral reality is to prepare ourselves by our training to be and do in life just what Nature, in the distribution of her gifts, has best qualified us to be and do; and that the heaping up of miscellaneous knowledge, under the pressure of examinations, competitive or otherwise, is about the worst method for accomplishing this object which human perversity has yet devised.*

* A witty professor, on being asked his opinion of certain college examinations for girls, recently established, is said to have replied: "It seems to me to be very much as though the town paupers were to come to the overseers of the poor and ask for assistance, and the overseers were to say, 'No, we have nothing

Examinations have their legitimate place and indispensable function in education. When teacher and pupil have faithfully done their respective parts, they may well sit down together and see how far they have successfully mastered the subjects in hand. Examinations are a needful supplement, — they can never be a substitute for teaching; and it is mortifying to see that, just when the enormous evils of too much dependence on them are being exposed by the very ablest of scholars and teachers in the mother-country, we should be threatened in this with a repetition of the mistaken policy. And we should especially be on our guard against the introduction of that bane of all true education, the competitive-examination system, — a system which substitutes an extraneous, mercenary motive for a true love of knowledge, obliterates all landmarks by which the student is guided to a knowledge of the limits of his powers and the nature of his real intellectual wants, and for the labor of learning substitutes a cramming process, which can only be compared to that of a lawyer getting up some patent-case, where, the moment the cause is won, the information needed to win it is

for you; but if you will come again, this day twelvemonth, we will *audit your accounts*.'" It is the *teaching* of the wise professors which the girls need.

swept out of a mind on which it never made any real impression.*

I sadly fear that amidst all this clatter of examinations we shall lose sight more and more of the only intellectual labor that really profits; of the —

> "Toil unsevered from tranquillity, —
> The labor that in *still* advance outgrows
> Far noisier schemes, — accomplished in *repose*
> Too great for haste, too high for rivalry."

What does all this recent foolish outcry against over-education, and especially against the over-education of girls, mean but this: not that there is too much education, — it will be many generations before there is any danger of that, — but that what education there is is of so bad a quality. It isn't too much study, Heaven knows, that our boys or

* I do not believe that this new system of running educational machinery by examination-power, and especially by competitive-examination-power, will ever succeed in producing any real and healthy growth in our school system, though it may temporarily serve a useful purpose as an antidote to the educational torpor of England. It is the last new nostrum in a department of human effort which is more than all others at the mercy of nostrum-mongers. I have accumulated notes of a great body of testimony against it from the best living scholars and wisest living teachers; but this is not the place to pursue the subject. It is encouraging to find that the accomplished gentleman who now holds the responsible office of Superintendent of Boston Schools is alive to its dangers. See his recently published first semi-annual Report.

our girls are in any danger from. The real danger, — and it is a great one, — comes from *bad* study and bad teaching. "True study," says a wise writer I fell in with the other day, "is eminently a leisurely process, the great condition of success in it being deliberation; and though it always sufficiently interests the student to keep his faculties lively, it seldom excites him to any dangerous degree. Hence, I believe that genuine study is much less injurious to health than is often supposed, — certainly, much less injurious than many things which are scarcely reputed injurious at all. The processes of genuine and well-directed study positively save the brain, by their rational and orderly sequence, by the safe advance from step to step. Study of this kind is like a well-built staircase, by which you can climb to a great height with a minimum of fatigue, never lifting the body more than a few inches at a time. But as there might be such a thing as racing up a staircase, so, when we study against time, there is a strain in the mere speed, however good may be the system that we are following. There mav also be a strain on the faculties, in the direction ot them towards a kind of study which is not adapted to our natural gifts. If we learn what Nature qualified us to learn,

and learn it step by step, without hurry, we incur a minimum of cerebral fatigue and gain a maximum of acquirement. Study of this kind gently stimulates, and does not fatigue, unless prolonged for an unreasonable length of time. It is positively favorable to health, because it is favorable to cheerfulness; it makes life pleasanter and more interesting, and so far from being injurious to the nervous system, gives it tone and vigor, exactly as manly exercises give tone and vigor to the muscular system. There can be no doubt that men were intended to bear intellectual labor without injury to their health [and women too]. We are constituted to think and learn, as a fish is constituted to swim or a bird to fly. But a man [or a woman] may bear this healthy kind of mental toil very easily, or may even derive real benefit from it, and yet be quite unable to bear either hurry or cram."*

I have a profound sense of the importance of systematic mental training, and know well what provoking defects are sure to characterize what are called self-educated men. It is the instinct which teaches us that any mental training, even the very worst, is better than none, that leads us to tolerate so long the enormous defects and the entire un-

* London "Globe," quoted in "Essays in Mosaic."

suitableness of the old classical system of education. Better this, we say, than no training. If the Greek and Latin classics are the only things we know how to teach, — utterly unsuited as they are to be the staple of education of our generation, — in such a way as to be a true mental discipline, let us continue to teach them till we have learned how to make a mental discipline out of the teaching of subjects as really suited to the wants of our age as the ancient classics were to the generation of the Renaissance. That time is fast approaching. Unhappily, I fear it must be admitted that between the senility and decrepitude of the old system, all run to pedantry and word-mongering, and the still inchoate condition of the new, our education-system is just now a realm of chaos and confusion, and the young man who has missed what is called a liberal education has perhaps quite as much reason to congratulate himself on the evil of misguidance he has escaped as on the advantages of mental discipline he has been deprived of.* At any rate, young men like your-

* What, for instance, can be more preposterous, judged by any rational or consistent theory of education, than the present entrance examinations to the oldest and most conspicuous of our colleges: examinations which still compel all candidates alike to waste their precious school-days over Greek and Latin grammars,

selves, with the intellectual resources of a great modern city at command, and with a resolute will to take advantage of them, need never despair of doing much for yourselves which colleges should have done, but very likely would not have done for you. You may well take encouragement in reading the long list of men eminent in all departments of intellectual activity, — the Watts, the Grotes, the Faradays, — who either received no college training, or have put on record an emphatic condemnation of that they did receive.*

almost precisely in the way, — perhaps, if any thing, in not so rational or so good a way, — as their predecessors spent them in times when a classical was a real education; while, the moment the candidate succeeds in entering the college gates, the modern theory of adapting education to the wants and capacities of the pupils is even too fully recognized by the "elective system." If the elective system, with proper restrictions, is the only true system, as it undoubtedly is, what possible objection can there be to applying it in season to save the boys' school-days from the obsolete pedantries of classical grinders? A real demand for good teachers of modern subjects would soon create a supply, and we might besides have some real classical scholars.

* See, for a beginning of such researches as will be the foundation at some, I fear far distant, day of a true inductive science of education, the little book, "English Men of Science, their Nature and Nurture;" and the more important work of Alphonse de Candolle, "Histoire des Sciences et des Savants depuis deux Siècles." The same investigation should be made into the early history of men distinguished in literature and in the practical pursuits of life.

In choosing the studies on which to spend such precious leisure hours and such reserve of mental power as you can command, I think you may well be guided mainly by two considerations: first, will such or such a study be helpful to you in your trade or profession, whatever that may be, — does it fall in with the mental aptitudes and habits of thought which your daily calling has produced? or, secondly, have you any natural love and inborn taste for it?

I am not afraid to say that a man may, if he chooses, make his calling and profession, — the very means by which he earns his bread, — into a liberal education. But is it not, perhaps you ask, the very definition of a liberal education that it should not "smell of the shop"? Yes, it is still the definition of certain high-stepping pedants, who have not yet waked up to the fact that the mediæval monopoly of the term "liberal," enjoyed by certain special callings and occupations, has quite ceased; and that in these modern days there are innumerable forms of education, all equally capable of being made liberal. When the merchant, for example, was the despised Jew, the prey of every plundering robber-baron, the robber-baron looked down upon the Jew, though even then the Jew could probably write his name, and his plunderer could not. But now,

when in every civilized community a vast proportion of its intellectual power is engrossed in the great operations of commerce and manufactures, how astonishing it is that any reasonable human being should not look upon them as liberal and liberalizing pursuits! How strange that a course of training should not be organized for them, as distinctly leading up to them as the training of what are called, *par excellence, the* liberal professions! Why, it is not many generations since the liberal profession of medicine grew out of the practice of barber-surgeons and old women; and the best and wisest physicians will be the readiest to tell you now that, with all their science, they are practically little better than careful and skilled nurses.

Let me advise you, then, to make your calling and occupation, whatever it may be, an instrument of education. The practice of the simplest handicraft involves and may lead a man straight to the study of the laws by which the universe is governed; for those laws are the same laws, whether in a globe or a drop of water. The time will surely come when it will hardly be credited that in a century which boasted itself of its enlightenment, and which was distinguished above all others for its progress in physical science, a costly system of

elementary education should have existed, in which, while much unintelligible grammar was prematurely taught, physical science was absolutely neglected. Why, Nature herself, if we would heed her ways, is for ever teaching the baby artisan, the baby mechanic. You are, most of you, engaged in commercial pursuits. See what a wide field of liberal study the merchant's calling might lead to. Would it make it any less liberal if the merchant or the manufacturer should follow the example of the lawyer and the physician, and select from the wide field of possible acquisitions those which would be practically useful to him in his calling? I think the study of the great currents of trade that flow round our globe, slowly uniting and civilizing nations, is at least as profitable a mental exercise as the study of the rise and fall of dynasties, or the gossip of court circulars. The question of Protection and Free Trade would be settled for ever by a single generation of scientifically educated merchants. A manufacturer would surely not be a worse man of business for possessing a scientific knowledge of the goods he makes or traffics in. Was Wedgewood a worse potter for possessing the artistic taste which led him to employ Flaxman to design his pitchers? It was the foundation of his fortune.

You say that a merchant can be a good merchant without such knowledge. I don't doubt it; but will he be a worse merchant with it? I assume that in desiring to hear of home study, you intimate that you do not want to devote body and soul to mere money-getting drudgery. You want to combine study with a life of business: well, make your business your study, not merely with the view of making more money by it, — though that would seem to be the directest way, — but with the view of elevating your business into a means of culture. When the merchant and the manufacturer shall prepare themselves for and pursue their calling in that spirit, they will be reckoned members of liberal professions; just as the barber-surgeon has grown into a Master of Arts, a Doctor of Science, and a member of royal colleges of medicine and surgery; just as the vast extent and complicated nature of modern mechanical works, demanding as they do an elaborate scientific training on the part of those superintending them, have already raised engineering to the dignity of a liberal profession.

One of the greatest of England's living preachers has thus described a too common type of merchant: "In every society, and especially in a country like our own, there are those who derive their chief

characteristic from what they *have*, who are always spoken of in terms of revenue, and of whom you would not be likely to think much but for the large account that stands on the world's ledger in their name. In themselves, detached from their favorite sphere, you would notice nothing wise or winning. At home, possibly a dry and withered heart; among associates, a selfish and mistrustful talk; in the council, a style of low and ignoble sentiment; at church, a formal, perhaps an irreverent dulness, — betray a barren nature, and offer you only points of repulsion, so far as the humanities are concerned. And you are amazed to think that you are looking on the idols of the Exchange. Their greatness comes out in the affairs of bargain and sale, to which their faculties seem fairly apprenticed for life. If they speak of the past, it is in memory of its losses and its gains; if of the future, it is to anticipate its incomings and its investments. The whole chronology of their life is divided according to the stages of their fortune; their children are interesting to them principally as their heirs; and the making of their will fulfils the main conception of being ready for their death. And so completely do they paint the grand idea of their life on the imagination of all who know them, that when they

die the mammon-image cannot be removed, and it is the fate of the money, not of the man, of which we are most apt to think. Having put vast prizes in the funds, but only unprofitable blanks in the admiration and the hearts of us, they leave behind nothing but their *property*, or, as it is expressively termed, their '*effects*,' — the thing which they caused, the main result of their having been alive." *

We are all familiar with the original of this picture of the uneducated man of wealth ; and it is a commonplace of the pulpits — though the great preacher I have just been quoting is far above such narrow-mindedness — that this is the natural and inevitable result upon the character, of commercial pursuits. But no opinion can be more unjust. Commerce and manufactures have expanded in these modern days into a field for the exercise of some of the very highest faculties of the human mind, and demand its very highest training. Let me contrast with this a different picture.

Speaking of the late accomplished editor of the London "Economist," Mr. Bagehot, a man who combined so remarkably a scientific knowledge of finance with great literary accomplishments, Mr.

* James Martineau's Endeavors after the Christian Life, p. 316.

Hutton says: "Every one who knows his writings in the 'Economist' knows how he ridiculed the common impression that the chief service of the capitalist class — that by which they *earn* their profits — is merely what the late Mr. Senior used to call 'abstinence;' that is, the practice of deferring their enjoyment of their savings, in order that those savings may multiply themselves; and how wholly inadequate he thought it merely to add that, when capitalists are themselves managers, they discharge the task of 'superintending labor' as well. Bagehot held that the capitalists of a commercial country do not merely the saving and the work of foremen in superintending labor, but all the difficult intellectual work of commerce besides; and are so little appreciated as they are, chiefly because they are a dumb class, who are seldom equal to explaining to others the complex processes by which they estimate the wants of the community and conceive how best to supply them. He maintained that capitalists are the great generals of commerce; that they plan its whole strategy, determine its tactics, direct its commissariat, and incur the danger of great defeats, as well as earn, if they do not always gain, the credit of great victories." *

* Fortnightly Review, Oct., 1877, p. 480.

Mr. Bagehot's description of the leaders in commerce and manufactures as a dumb class is so far true that unhappily we still have to look upon Mr. Bagehot himself as an unusual phenomenon; and are still more astonished when a London banker, without university education, writes an elaborate and admirable history. But is not the wonder rather that in these days these should be unusual phenomena? And would they continue so, if the pursuit of commerce were looked upon, as it should be, as a liberal and liberalizing profession, with its own appropriate course of liberal professional training. We express no surprise when we find in the descendant of the feudal baron a cultivated and accomplished gentleman, though in all probability the founder of his family could not write his name.

And in truth, just as the vastness of modern mechanical enterprises has raised engineering into a liberal profession, so the demands of modern commerce are so great that even for the sake of material success alone these demands must be met by higher forms of education. On this point, Mr. Matthew Arnold has raised a warning voice in his recent valuable Report on the Higher Education of Germany.

"If the English business class," he says, "can

listen to testimonies that, in the judgment of others at any rate, its inferior education is beginning to threaten it with practical inconvenience, such testimonies are formidably plentiful. A diplomatist of great experience, not an Englishman, but much attached to England, who, in the course of the acquisition and the construction of the Italian lines of railroad, had been brought much in contact with young men of business of all nations, told me that the young Englishman of this class was manifestly inferior, both in manners and instruction, to the corresponding young men of other countries. . . . And the Swiss and Germans aver, if you question them as to the benefit they have got from the *Realschulen* and Polytechnicums, that in every part of the world their men of business, trained in those schools, are beating the English when they meet on equal terms as to capital ; and that when English capital, as so often happens, is superior, the advantage of the Swiss or the German in instruction tends more and more to balance this superiority. M. Duruy, till lately the French Minister of Public Instruction, confirms this averment, not as against England in especial, but generally, by saying that all over the Continent the young North German, or the young Swiss of Zurich or Basle, is seizing, by rea-

son of his better instruction, a confidence and a command in business which the young men of no other nation can dispute with him." *

To the same effect, Prof. Goldwin Smith, writing on University Extension, says: "The change to which, and the question arising out of it, we wish here emphatically to call attention, is the increased demand for university culture produced of late by the immense development of the wealthy class, particularly in the great centres of manufacture and trade. . . . It is necessary that the chiefs of English industry should have culture. It is necessary for themselves, if they would truly and worthily enjoy their riches. A man of business in America being asked why, having already amassed enormous wealth and having no children, he still, in the evening of life, went on building saw-mills, answered: 'I have no education. I can find no pleasure in reading, hardly any in conversation. I have no taste for any thing, no interest in any subject. What can I do but build saw-mills?' Still more necessary is it for the nation that the leaders of its industrial society, and the arbiters of the questions which it is evident industrial society in the coming

* Arnold's "Higher Schools and Universities in Germany," p. 210.

years will present, should possess the openness of mind, the intellectual elevation, and the breadth of view which, as a general rule, culture alone can give." *

And, whether in the college or the scientific school, it is very manifest that that culture must take on new forms, adapted to the new circumstances; that a youthful training in Latin and Greek grammars is no more its proper instrument than would be a training in the folios of the mediæval schoolmen. The high promise of many a youthful life has been blasted through the perverse efforts of pedants making it the victim of their unsuitable training.†

In laying out the true liberal education of the merchant, the manufacturer, and the man of practical affairs, the natural and physical sciences afford one wide and ever-enlarging field of study; while, as a good patriot and good citizen, he is bound to make himself acquainted with political science,‡

* Fortnightly Review, January, 1878.

† It excites one's indignation to see how, in the so-called High Schools all over the country, the education of the great majority of the pupils is sacrificed to the interests of a mere handful of youths who are preparing for a college examination in the Latin and Greek classics. I speak from a large experience in the examination of the victims.

‡ The rapid and decisive success of that new experiment in the higher education, the "École Libre des Sciences Politiques," in

political history, and political economy. What is it that at this moment threatens an honest and solvent country with the disgrace of repudiation, but the knavery of demagogues — of whom I fear Massachusetts has the bad eminence of producing the most impudent and worst — acting on the dense ignorance of the mass of the people, and even of their fellow-legislators? Would such a state of things have existed if the occupation of the merchant, in all its varieties, were looked upon, as it should be, as a liberal profession, and prepared for with professional zeal and accuracy?

Take, then, for your hobby whatever pleases you — the more remote from your daily calling the better, because the more refreshing. Unhappy is the man who cannot give himself rest and change and recreation by mounting a hobby. Be it butterflies or microscopes or Jersey cattle, have a hobby; the best you can afford, the one that gives you most amusement. But that is amusement. *Study* your profession, not merely that you may make more money, — for that would be to be illiberal, — but that you may make your calling the instrument for liberalizing your mind. Do not degrade your

Paris, is one among many evidences of the latent demand that exists for new and better educational organization and machinery.

characters as men of business by imitating that most illiberal of all illiberal kinds of study, albeit carried on at universities, — the cramming for competitive examinations, the headlong race for the money prizes of college scholarships and fellowships.

And this will lead to one further result: it will teach the much-needed lesson of *concentration;* the lesson that, if we are to accomplish anything in this world, we must not dissipate our forces. It is the bad farmer who just scratches the surface of too many acres; the good general who fights it out on the same line. The main reason for the ill success of our reading and our education is because they lack point, lack system, lack concentration. So that I am inclined to think that the time is coming when the very opposite view will be taken of what constitutes a liberal education from what has heretofore prevailed; and instead of its being thought to be a vague and indefinite something, made up of disconnected ingredients, whose chief characteristic is that they are as remote as possible from the duties and responsibilities of life, he will come hereafter to be considered to have the best liberal education who, having discovered betimes what he was best fitted to do in life, shall have prepared

himself in the soundest and most perfect manner to do that work in the broadest and most liberal spirit. Then the antiquated superstition will disappear, that there is a necessary antagonism between what is practical and what is liberal. Then the merchant will not be — to imitate a phrase of Mr. Emerson's — a trader, but a man trading; the engineer will not be an engineer, but a man engineering; the farmer not a farmer, but a man farming. And why a man farming, or a man trading, should be inferior in dignity to a man preaching, or a man healing the sick, or a man pleading a cause, it passes my wisdom to discover.

I have no method of study to prescribe to you. There are as many methods as there are men. The mind, if it has any true vitality, is a magnet which selects unerringly from the heap of knowledge those grains which are in vital relation with itself; but, unlike the magnet, every mind has its own specialty of attraction. But the metaphor is incomplete: for it must not only attract particles of knowledge into a heap, — it must assimilate them into a whole; and though this is done partly in the poet's "wise passiveness," * yet that wise

* "Nor less I deem that there are powers
Which of themselves our minds impress:
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness." WORDSWORTH.

passiveness is never earned save by much and wise activity. But I say the mind must have *vitality;* and I sadly fear, nay, I am very sure, that the true vitality of many a young mind is paralyzed, not developed, by our dead mechanical school-training.

Do not imagine that you can find study easy, or that, as busy and occupied men, you can do very much of it. It is the easiest thing in the world to waste time over books. The fundamental error about reading is to suppose it easy. The tired man reads, and is not conscious that he is learning nothing, simply because his mental force is already exhausted; or he throws down his book in disgust, and calls himself stupid and a dunce, unconscious all the while that throughout the day he may have been exerting mental powers and mental activity which the best student might well afford to envy. Such are the contradictory superstitions about books, — on the one hand that they are mysterious complicated machines, which it takes a lifetime to learn to manage; on the other that they are the fit recreation for exhausted minds. One view is as far from truth as the other. Books are tools of knowledge, like any other tools. To be a great scholar or a great writer is as difficult as to be a great merchant or a great captain, — no more, no less. To write a

good book requires the same investment of time and thought and patient labor as to make money, or build a bridge, or plead a cause successfully, — no more, no less. There have been a few great geniuses in the world who have written very great books. So there have been a few great generals, a few great statesmen. Men of genius in all departments are very rare ; the makers of great fortunes are not many. But the majority of books are not miraculous performances. Given the requisite leisure, the requisite command of materials, a reasonable amount of brains, and the rest is, as everywhere else in human affairs, a matter of patient, persevering labor. And as is the making of books, so is the reading of them, — a matter of time and patient perseverance.

I cannot close without giving you one little piece of purely practical advice. I advise you all to become what I am myself, devoted disciples of Captain Cuttle, and to bind on your brows his admirable maxim, "When found, make a note of." Witty old Thomas Fuller says: "Adventure not all thy learning in one bottom, but divide it between thy memory and thy note-books. . . . A commonplace book contains many notions in garrison, whence an owner may draw out an army into the field

on competent warning." This is one of those notions which I have kept in the garrison of my note-book for many years. The great secret of reading consists in this, that it does not matter so much what we read or how we read it, as what we think and how we think it. Reading is only the fuel; and, the mind once on fire, any and all material will feed the flame, provided only it have any combustible matter in it. And we cannot tell from what quarter the next material will come. The thought we need, the facts we are in search of, may make their appearance in the corner of the newspaper, or in some forgotten volume long ago consigned to dust and oblivion. Hawthorne, in the parlor of a country inn, on a rainy day, could find mental nutriment in an old directory. That accomplished philologist, the late Lord Strangford, could find ample amusement for an hour's delay at a railway station in tracing out the etymology of the names in Bradshaw. The mind that is not awake and alive will find a library a barren wilderness. Now, gather up the scraps and fragments of thought on whatever subject you may be studying, — for of course by a note-book I do not mean a mere receptacle for odds and ends, a literary dust-bin, — but acquire the habit of gath-

ering every thing whenever and wherever you find it, that belongs in your own line or lines of study, and you will be surprised to see how such fragments will arrange themselves into an orderly whole by the very organizing power of your own thinking, acting in a definite direction. This is a true process of self-education; but you see it is no mechanical process of mere aggregation. It requires activity of thought, — but without that what is any reading but mere passive amusement? And it requires method. I have myself a sort of literary book-keeping. I keep a day-book, and at my leisure I post my literary accounts, bringing together in proper groups the fruits of much casual reading.

But let him who would succeed in knowing any thing be careful of one rule, — not to meddle in his studies with subjects that don't concern him. He may read for amusement what he pleases: in his studies let him keep himself to his chosen line and keep order among his acquisitions, if he would have his intellectual wealth accumulate. He need not potter about to find the very best thing: let him take the best available. A poor book — a very erroneous book — is sometimes the very best provocative of thought. Who is better for this than Mr. Buckle, and who is fuller of crude

paradoxes and undigested knowledge? Of him unfortunately that was true which Bentley said of Warburton, that "there never was a man with so great an appetite and so bad a digestion." You say Mr. Buckle himself was a great commonplace-book maker. Yes, but he didn't half digest his commonplaces. Take them and digest them yourself.

And I have one more thing to say, — that nothing can be done in study without a spirit of fearless independence. He who is not prepared to set Truth above all sect or party, or popular prejudice or mere traditional belief, will never find her, and may as well abandon the search. And in these days of warring faiths and contradictory philosophies, this is hard. But study is not easy; thinking is not easy. Whatever is worth having in this world has got to be paid for. Let me only recommend that your independence be the thoughtful independence of a modest man, not the brawling aggressive independence of a fool; and let me give it as my deepest conviction, that it is only by the exercise of such a modest and manly independence that we can attain to that calmness of faith that enables us to bear the troubles of this life, and secures to us a belief in a better one. And you

will accept this advice perhaps the more readily from one who knows well the responsibility he incurs in giving it, but who, in a life which has had its full share of disappointments and sorrows, has never repented of having acted upon it himself; and who, now that his hair has grown gray, can say in all honesty that, though he knows much less than at your age he thought he knew, yet believes and hopes a great deal more; and who sees no better way for us, in these days when the foundations of the great deep are moved, and the old systems, but not old truths, are vanishing, than to possess our souls in patience, think modestly but independently for ourselves, and seek unweariedly for the light which, when sought for rightly, will never fail us.

And, studied in this spirit, who can overestimate the value of good books, — those ships of thought, as Bacon so finely calls them, voyaging through the sea of time, and carrying their precious freight so safely from generation to generation? Here are the finest minds giving us the best wisdom of present and all past ages; here are intellects gifted far beyond ours, ready to give us the results of lifetimes of patient thought; imaginations open to the beauty of the universe, far beyond what it is given us to behold; characters whom we can only vainly hope

to imitate, but whom it is one of the highest privileges of life to know. Here they all are; and to learn to know them is the privilege of the educated man. To travel life's journey without knowing them is to be uneducated; to be taught to pretend to know them, — to know the surface and shell of them, without ever penetrating to the reality, — that is to be *mis*educated; and there is no country in the world where so much of that miseducation goes on as our own. However much or however little may be our acquaintance with books, let us strive to make it a real acquaintance, and we shall find few better companions than the best of these silent ones.

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